

FROM: THE TALKING EGGPLANT

A dog who read the Collected Works of Anton Chekhov became confused, and ashamed, grew gray hair, squinted, barked in a minor key, reminisced often to his friends and began to have opinions about compulsory vaccination, dog licenses and suicide.

After straying from the expedition the child was adopted by the giant ants of Madagascar by whom he was nurtured until the age of thirteen when rescue came and he returned to civilization to become an expert on efficiency experts.

The editor-in-chief of "Astrology" observed that there were certain months of the year when circulation fell for no earthly reason. He discovered that the horoscope of the person in charge of circulation was malignant for those periods and adopted a system of rotating three circulation managers so that the stars would always be benign to his enterprise.

At three o'clock in the morning during a great storm, a chess master in a small hotel room on the island of Majorca secretly altered a move in the only existing record of a game that he had played and won in an obscure tournament at Baden Baden fifty years ago in order to make himself appear more brilliant. The Devil, observing this transgression, condemned him to an eternity of watching beginners learn the game in the Diabolical Kindergarten.

The statistician who planned a study of how many widows are disconsolate and how many are liberated was forced to abandon his plan for personal interviews and employs an anonymous questionnaire which is enclosed with a stamped self-addressed envelope.

When the physicians found that the victim of amnesia remembered with what percentage of the population he had cast his vote in the last election, his tax category, his intelligence quotient, the world records for barrel-jumping, juggling, stilt-walking and number of marriages but was unable to recall any other fact of his past life, they exhausted their therapies, named him "The Statistic" and gave up hope.

When the metaphysician was asked to explain how he would recognize the emergence of the Ultraman whose appearance he had predicted in ten thousand pages of impenetrable prose in a typography that deranged hundreds of retinas beyond hope of repair and how he would distinguish him from the Superman, the Overman, the Praeterman, or the Giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk," the metaphysician answered, "He would understand us but we would not understand his way of understanding how he understood us."

In the statesman's nightmare he entered the zoological garden at night and the gates clanged, locking behind him. The doors of the cages were open, creatures wild and tame wandered on the paths, challenges, snarls, skirmishes, feints and shrieks cut the air, and as the animals began to devour one another he pleaded with them to select an Overseer and to establish committees that would absorb some of the hostile energies of the most dangerous beasts.

When the warm, clear days of July come to the lunatic asylum there is a pleasant old man who has to be persuaded to leave what he is doing and enter the flourishing garden of roses. In fine, he is reluctant to put down the blank sheet of paper which he has punctured with a pin in order to sieve and separate the motes from sunbeams -- this obstinate behavior began many years ago when as a distinguished historian he attempted to separate symptoms from causes.

A physiologist who had eaten nothing but grasshoppers for several months suddenly spent all of his savings, chewed tobacco, won the distance jumping contest in the Olympic games and was able to speak with ants.

-- Jerome Salzmänn

Elmhurst NY

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE WORKS OF STEVIE CRANE

he wrote poems as spare as this.